

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

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AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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SUBJECT: SYRIAN PRESS COMMENTARY ON U.S. POLICY REASSESSMENT AND
GENEVA CONFERENCE

1. SUMMARY: SYRIAN PRESS IS UNIFORMLY SKEPTICAL ABOUT
U.S. POLICY REASSESSMENT TOWARD MIDDLE EAST. PRESS
ALSO IS BEGINNING TO CALL FOR ISRAELI COMMITMENTS
REGARDING WITHDRAWAL AND PALESTINIAN RIGHTS PRIOR TO
CONVENING OF GENEVA CONFERENCE. END SUMMARY.

2. U.S. POLICY REASSESSMENT: SYRIAN COLUMNISTS
OVER LAST FEW DAYS HAVE EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM OVER SCOPE
OF U.S. POLICY REASSESSMENT TOWARD MIDDLE EAST. SALIM
KHALIFA IN MARCH 29 AL-THAWRA WONDERS WHETHER AMERICA
WILL SEE INEFFECTIVENESS ITS PRESENT POLICIES AND CHANGE
THEM OR CONCENTRATE ON NEW METHODS TO ACHIEVE EXISTING
"AGRESSIVE POLICY." YUSUF MAQDISI IN MARCH 30
AL-THAWRAH MAINTAINED THAT "CHANGE WILL ONLY BE
TACTICAL AND PART OF SEARCH FOR WAY OUT OF AMERICAN
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CRISIS." SAME COLUMNIST NEXT DAY WROTE THAT "POSSIBLE

CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY IS CHANGE IN METHOD AND NOT IN ESSENCE." MAQDISI ADDED THAT HUGE MILITARY AID TO ISRAEL WAS DESIGNED "TO GIVE ISRAEL GREEN LIGHT TO INFLAME WAR AND CRUSH ANY POSSIBILITY OF JUST AND DURABLE PEACE IN AREA." MUHAMMAD ZU'AYTIR IN MARCH 30 AL-THAWRAH THOUGHT U.S. SHOULD UNDERTAKE CLEAR CRITICISM OF ISRAEL AND HALT IN MILITARY AND FINANCIAL AID IN ORDER TO PRESSURE ISRAEL TO ACCEPT UN RESOLUTIONS WHICH U.S. "PRETENDS" TO SUPPORT. ABD AL-RAUF KIFRI IN MARCH 30 AL-BAATH WARNED THAT "A FIFTH WAR IS INEVITABLE." ALI HAYDAR IN APRIL 1 AL-BAATH SEES RISK OF RETURN TO NO-WAR, NO-PEACE STATE "IF U.S. DOES NOT CHANGE ITS POLICY" AND ACCEPT PLO AS SOLE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF PALESTINIANS AND ARABS' RIGHT TO RECOVER THEIR USURPED LANDS. SAMIR ARABASH IN APRIL 2 AL-BAATH COLUMN CRITICIZED THE "DEADLOCK" IN AMERICAN POLICY AND CLAIMED THAT KISSINGER MISSION FAILED BECAUSE U.S. DID NOT EXERT ENOUGH PRESSURE TO OVERCOME ISRAELI "OBSTINANCY." NOTING THAT AMERICAN WEAPONS HAD FAILED TO PREVENT DEFEAT OF PRO-AMERICAN REGIMES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, ARABASH CALLS UPON U.S. TO HALT ARMS FLOW TO ISRAEL AND BRING PEACE TO REGION.

3. GENEVA CONFERENCE: MARCH 31 AL-BAATH FRONT-PAGED PRAVDA ARTICLE STRESSING THAT AGENDA FOR GENEVA CONFERENCE SHOULD INCLUDE PRIOR ISRAELI COMMITMENTS FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. AMID KHULI IN SEPARATE COLUMN ADDED THAT ISRAEL SHOULD COMMIT ITSELF TO TWO CONDITIONS FOR ACHIEVING PEACE PRIOR TO CONVENING CONFERENCE: WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED LANDS AND RECOGNITION OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. KHULI CONCLUDED, "WITHOUT A CLEAR FORMULA AND WITHOUT PRIOR ISRAELI COMMITMENTS GENEVA CONFERENCE WILL BECOME FUTILE AND WE MAY BE FORCED TO DECIDE WHETHER TO BOYCOTT IT OR LET RIFLE BE USED." MUHAMMAD ZU'AYTIR IN MARCH 30 AL-THAWRAH WROTE THAT GENEVA COULD BE SUITABLE VENUE FOR SETTLING ISSUES "IF THE OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS FOR ITS SUCCESS BECOME AVAILABLE." HE ADDED THAT "TASK OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE IS IMPLEMENTATION OF UN RESOLUTIONS," AND WARNED THAT SYRIA WILL REFUSE TO ALLOW PROCRASTINATION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BY ITS ENEMIES AT CONFERENCE. SAMIR ARABASH IN APRIL 1 AL-BAATH WROTE THAT "DESPITE CONCEDING CONVOCATION GENEVA CONFERENCE, U.S. STILL ADHERES TO PRINCIPLE OF SEPARATE SETTLEMENTS." AMID KHULI IN APRIL 3 AL-BAATH COLUMN AGAIN NOTED "NECESSITY" OF OBTAINING ISRAELI COMMITMENT PRIOR TO GENEVA TO GUARANTEE MINIMUM ARAB DEMANDS REGARDING TERRITORIAL WITHDRAWAL AND PALESTINIAN RIGHTS.

4. COMMENT: SYRIAN MEDIA NOT PERMITTING ITSELF
DRAW MUCH HOPE FROM U.S. POLICY REASSESSMENT TOWARD
MIDDLE EAST, WHICH IT PERCEIVES AS CONTAINING LITTLE
OF BENEFIT FOR SYRIA AND ARAB INTERESTS IN GENERAL.
REGARDING GENEVA, REPEATED PRESS DEMAND FOR PRIOR
ISRAELI COMMITMENTS MAY INDICATE SARG BEGINNING TO
REALIZE HOW COMPLICATED CONVENING CONFERENCE IS
GOING TO BE.
PELLETREAU

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